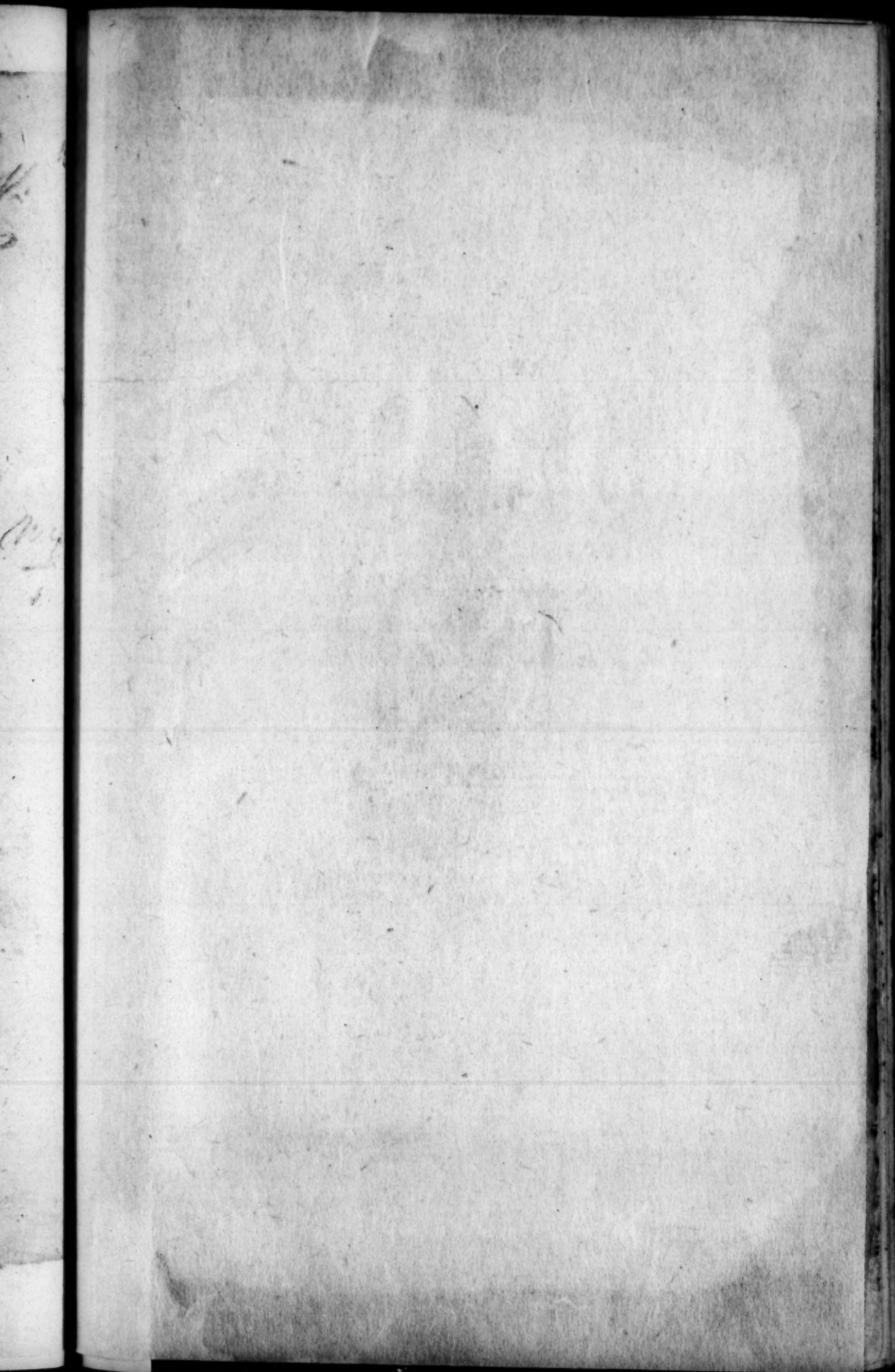


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A
L E T T E R
T O A
LOVER OF THE GOSPEL.

Occasioned by his
A P P E A L
To serious and candid
PROFESSORS of CHRISTIANITY.

On the following Subjects, viz.

- | | |
|---|--|
| I. The Use of Reason in
Matters of Religion. | IV. Election and Reprobation. |
| II. The Power of Man to do
the Will of God. | V. The Divinity of Christ. |
| III. Original Sin. | And,
VI. Atonement for Sin by the
Death of Christ. |

Search the Scriptures, JOHN v. 39.

L O N D O N :

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LETTER

FLOWER OF THE COAST

ORDERED BY

A. P. 1871



A

L E T T E R

TO A

Lover of the Gospel, &c.

SIR,

UNKNOWN as I am to you, I say nothing about my 'deep concern for the honour of a religion which is the most valuable' blessing ever bestowed on 'the human race'; as they only who are acquainted with me, can form any judgment about it, whether I have or have not that concern: but, apprehending that you have greatly mistaken, and misrepresented that *gospel*, of which you call yourself a *lover*, I shall take the liberty to follow you step by step, and try the ground on which you have invited the Christian world to walk with you. He that made us, commands us to *try the spirits, whether they are of God*; therefore I am in no danger of offending a real *lover of the true gospel*, by doing it.

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The liberty of private judgment is our birth-right privilege as men and protestants; but whilst we hold this fast against the whole world, I trust we shall agree to assert, that, where the gospel comes, all are bound to receive, with devout attention, every truth which God has revealed. And as inspired truths, especially those which are most necessary, are made sufficiently plain in scripture; must it not arise from something wrong in human nature, that professors of Christianity, with the same Bible in their hands, entertain such widely different views, even of the great hopes of their calling? This at least is a great infelicity to the Christian world; therefore I dare not seek the source of it in God, it must spring from a different quarter; and whether *Calvin* or *Socinus* thought most justly of God's truths, as fellow-creatures, the opinions of these men do not concern us; and I neither fear nor revere the ghost of either of them. *To the law and to the testimony*; this is our rule; by this we shall stand or fall. If what you have written in your *Appeal* is agreeable to this, it will stand; if not, the number of its admirers, hurrying it through ever so many editions, can never add substance to that which is but a shadow.

The six subjects of your appeal are confessedly important in themselves; *viz.*

- I. The use of reason in matters of religion.
 - II. The power of man to do the will of God.
 - III. Original sin.
 - IV. Election and reprobation.
 - V. The divinity of Christ. And,
 - VI. Atonement for sin by the death of Christ.
- To begin with the first of these, *viz.*

I. *Of*

I. *Of the use of reason in matters of religion.* Both reason and revelation certainly ‘proceed from the same God and Father of us all, who is the giver of every good and every perfect gift’; and ‘they cannot therefore be contrary to one another.’ Without reason we could not be religious; this also makes way for, and enables us to discover, that true revelation, which is given to assist the natural and moral defects of reason: and it will be the condemnation of modern baptized infidels, that they will not use that capacity which God has given them, to discern the evident traces and signatures of himself, which shine conspicuous upon his word for this purpose, *Light is come into the world, but they love darkness rather than light.* Yet though, in practical cases, God himself frequently appeals to the reason of man; (Ezek. xviii. 29. John v. 39. 1 Cor. xiv. 20. 1 Thess. v. 21.) neither reason nor revelation was given us, or any other rational beings, with a design that we should find out the Almighty to perfection. It is the business of finite reason to *apprehend*, not to *comprehend* the things of God.

Whom then do you mean, Sir, by ‘those who decry human reason, and require you to abandon it wherever religion is concerned?’ The Trinitarians deny the charge; and painfully feel the injury which you have done, not themselves, but the men whom you may have prevailed upon to believe this *fiction* against them. They are indeed confident, that not men nor angels, in their most perfect state, can ever comprehend many things, which yet it would be the highest absurdity not to believe: they would therefore esteem it a reproach to them, in the present benighted state, if they should be thought to pretend to measure understandings with their

their Maker, or take upon them to decide what he can, or cannot have revealed. When their reason has discovered the marks of a true revelation from God, they hold themselves bound to take the inspired messages in their plain and obvious meaning, without wresting them in the least, to favour any human *hypothesis* whatever; and devoutly adore those deep things of God which no creature can find out to perfection. Experience too, as well as scripture, has taught many of them, that *the natural man**, the man who is furnished with nothing more than a common life, *receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*, 1 Cor. ii. 14. Light from heaven has shewn them, that out of the heart of man proceed evil reasonings †, both against doctrinal and practical truths. Matth. xv. 19; (nor dare they deny their own concern in this charge, whilst they feel it true of themselves) for *the carnal mind*‡, *the wisdom of the flesh*, is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be: so then they that are in the flesh cannot please God, viz. because they have not the Spirit of God dwelling in them, Rom. viii. 7, 8, 9. Therefore, wherever the gospel comes savingly to any heart, it not only pulls down strong holds in the will, but in the understanding too; it casts down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, bringing into captivity every doctrinal and practical thought to the obedience of Christ, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

* Τυχικος ανθρωπος.

† Διαλογισμοι πονηροι.

‡ Φρονημα σαρκος.

Human

Human reason can prove the scriptures to be the word of God; but the above passages assure us, that our reason must be sanctified and renewed by the grace of God, before we can savingly receive divine truths: accordingly, says the apostle, *We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God, 1 Cor. ii. 12.* The higher, as well as the lower powers of the soul, have been much hurt by the apostacy; hence it is, that the candle of the Lord in man shines dimmer in spiritual than in temporal things: besides, the poison of sin is fallen into it, which makes its light even dangerous to us, as we have before proved, if God is not with us to furnish the soul with an antidote against that poison, and to direct to the noblest use of our own rationality. If the sinner dislikes this dependence on the grace of God, for a spiritual discernment of divine things, I pray God to bring him to it; for he that leans to his own understanding, is already fallen.—You know who has said, *If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise; for you can never enjoy the true use of human reason, in spiritual things, till you resolve to abandon the wisdom of the flesh.*

II. *Of the power of man to do the will of God.* If I understand you right, you are for sending men to heaven upon their own legs; but let us hear what God the Lord has said. *Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, Matth. vii. 16. and xii. 34. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh, John iii. 6. Not one man can come unto me, except*

*except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him, John vi. 44. ** Accordingly, they who believe on him, are said to be born, not of blood, or in consequence of their descent from pious ancestors; nor of the will of the flesh, or by any exertions whatever of their own depraved powers; nor of the will of the holiest man living, who might earnestly desire this grace for them; but of God, John i. 13. who puts forth an exceeding greatness of power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Eph. i. 19, 20.

Such is the power employed to bring men to Christ; and when they are in him, hear what the Lord says to them; *Abide in me, and I in you; as the branch cannot bear fruit, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. He that abideth in me, by his faith, and I in him, by my Spirit, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing, John xv. 4, 5. Your life is hid, with Christ, in God, Col. iii. 3. and of his fulness have we all received, and grace for grace, John i. 16.* Accordingly, that apostle, who was employed to strengthen his brethren, tells them, that they are kept (as in a garrison †) by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time, 1 Pet. i. 5. and St. Paul says of himself, *I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, Gal. ii. 20.*

* *Oudes.* If the Father only draws men by addressing motives and evidences to them, then they save themselves; he only works without, not in them, to will and to do; and there was no reason for Christ's saying, ver. 43. *Murmur not among yourselves, no man can, &c.*

† *Φρουρουμενους.* See 2 Cor. xi. 32. Gr.

and

and as to his ministry, whilst he was *striving*, according to his working which wrought in him mightily, he expressly disclaims all self-dependence, in these words; *not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing, as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God, 2 Cor. iii. 5.*

But to support that scheme, by which the pride of man is most securely seeking his eternal ruin, you quote *Isai. i. 16. Wash ye*; And I am sorry it was not to your purpose to inform us, that the word there used *, commonly signifies, if it is not wholly appropriated to describe, that washing which does not *penetrate* the substance of *the thing washed*, as the washing of the body, &c. and that when such an all-pervading, penetrating washing is intended, a very different word is used, *Psal. li. 2, 7. †* Why then did you chuse this word?—You add, *v. 18. Come now* (and not before) ‡ possibly forgetting that the word signifies *I pray, I beseech you*, as well as *now*; and as an adverb of time, has in this place a manifest reference to the preceding admonitions and remonstrances; so the word *now* is frequently used amongst us, after admonitions given.

We are commanded, *make you a new heart, and a new spirit, Ezek. xviii. 31*; but is this *Law against the Promise, chap. xxxvi. 26, a new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you?* for the words *heart* and *spirit* are the same, in the Hebrew, in both places. The truth is, man, as a subject of moral government, has a natural power to love and obey his maker, and to repent

* רחץ † כבס ‡ נא quæso, obsecro, nunc.

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and believe; therefore God reasons with, commands and intreats him; and why do these methods of divine mercy leave him so senseless and unmoved? The reason is plain; though he has a natural power, yet he is morally impotent, he has no will to the things of God; and this is the cause of his ruin. *Ye will not come to me,* says our Lord, *that ye might have life.* John v. 40. The evil reasonings of his heart, rise, like stinking vapours from a dunghill, to suffocate and disable every good thought, and design which rises in his mind upon hearing the calls of God, till the Lord in mercy draws nigh, and *works in him both to will and to do, of his own good pleasure:* till then, he has talents, but no will to improve them; and a *price put into his hands to get wisdom,* but no heart for it. Therefore no man was ever saved, but in consequence of that grace which has promised, *thy people shall be willing, in the day of thy power,* Psal. cx. 3. and when they are willing, God, having begotten them, becomes a father to such, in a New-Covenant sense.

But though we say, from the scripture, that *by Grace men are saved,* did we ever represent God, as ‘urging men to provide for their own safety and ‘happiness, when himself had put an effectual bar ‘in the way of it?’ No, Sir, it is the sinner himself that puts the bar in the way of his own happiness, by refusing to use conscientiously those means which God has appointed; and which, if so used, would be made effectual to that end.

You add, ‘Suppose that any man’s children were ‘shut up in a building that was on fire, while he ‘himself was without, and had the key; and that, ‘instead of opening the door to favour their escape, ‘he should only call out to them to flee out of the

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‘ place, in order to avoid instant destruction ; and
 ‘ that, as the necessary consequence of this, they
 ‘ should all perish in the flames before his eyes ;
 ‘ what would you think of such a father ? Yet in
 ‘ this very light, do many Christian divines represent
 ‘ the conduct of that God, *whose tender mercies are*
 ‘ *over all his works*’. Unhappily, this is all fiction and
 slander ; and the ‘ cruelty you want words to ex-
 ‘ press,’ never had any but an ideal existence. On
 the contrary, the men whom you hold up to uni-
 versal ‘ abhorrence’, assert, that God has opened a
 door, Christ, for these children’s escape, and stands
 at that door, ready to afford them immediate aid ;
 yea he strives with them, by his word and spirit, to
 get them out of the fire ; and if they would exert
 the powers they have, they would be sure of his
 help ; but, miserably insensible as they are of their
 danger, some of them hear their father’s voice cal-
 ling to them, yet will not attend ; and others, in-
 stead of coming towards the door, the only place
 at which they can possibly escape, waste all their
 time in trying to get out another way, where there
 is no friendly hand ready to yield them any assist-
 ance. And I beseech you to consider, whether the
 pains you have taken to lessen their sense of their
 danger by sin ; and at the same time to exalt their
 own power, and to depreciate the person, atone-
 ment and grace of the Son of God, will not be con-
 sidered, at the day of judgment, as an attempt to
 draw these miserable children away from the only
 door, at which they could have escaped.

It does not appear to please you, that ‘ a state of
 ‘ acceptance with God’ should, in any instances
 whatever, be represented as ‘ brought about in a
 ‘ moment, or in a very short space of time’ ; for-

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getting possibly that this was the case with a penitent Jew, when he offered the appointed sacrifices; with the thief upon the cross; and with the three thousand converts at the day of Pentecost. But if a change of state and of heart, or if the latter alone of these, 'can only be brought about by serious resolution, and a vigorous and constant exertion of 'our powers', from what I have seen of human nature, I am persuaded it will require more time to produce it, than the seventy or eighty years which are allowed us in this world; what then must become of those unhappy creatures, who are not continued half so long in life?—But they who know least of the nature of sin, and the power which it has gained over them, are always found to be the most confident of their own ability to subdue it.

III. Of Original Sin.

You assure us, that 'it is not possible we should 'have sinned in Adam'; but God tells me, that *by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that**, or in whom, *all have sinned*; it comes to the same, translate it either way; *for by one man's disobedience many were made†*, or constituted, not only miserable but, *sinners*, Rom. v. 12—19. By sin cannot be here meant punishment, because the apostle immediately distinguishes, in the words before us, between death the punishment, and sin the meritorious cause of it; besides, the words *sin, disobedience, transgression* and *offence*, which occur in this place, indisputably describe that which is the source and

* ΕΦ'Ω.

† Κατεσθηναν.

cause

cause of all penal evils. Judge then, ye serious and candid professors of Christianity, which of these contrary accounts are the most worthy of your belief. That infants die, who have *not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression*, and that *death is the wages of sin*, will surely not be doubted; therefore if they are eternally saved, it must be by grace or by works: by works it cannot be, because they can perform none; besides, they have already *sinned*, and are *made sinners*, therefore it must be by grace, as the scripture speaks.

'Good and bad conduct', as they respect men, may be 'in their own nature *personal*'; but unless you knew God perfectly, you have asserted in the *dark*, (and in opposition to the *light* of scripture too) that 'no sin of the' first Adam, 'or righteousness of the' second, 'can be considered as' ours, in the eye of an equitable and just God'. But, supposing it would be unbecoming the divine wisdom and goodness, to make our weal or woe depend upon the conduct of a *fallen* parent; it by no means follows from hence, that it was unrighteous in God to lodge the interests of his posterity in a *perfect* man, the first Adam, and where could they have been more securely vested? or how could it consist with the divine justice, now to inflict the very least part of the penalty, due to Adam's sin, upon his offspring, if they had not been parties originally concerned in his covenant? Facts, Sir, demand assent, whether we can account for the reason of them or not. As sin produces misery, so wherever there is misery, there must be sin, either personal or imputed; for fruit always supposes a connatural root which produces it. Either there-

fore deny the suffering, or own the sin which is imputed to infants, and to Christ.

True, a child may now suffer in consequence of the sin of his immediate parents, without sharing at all in their personal guilt, because our present parents are not constituted such heads to us, as the first Adam was to all; therefore *the soul only that sinneth, it shall die*, Ezek. xviii. 4: and the disease or distress, which any child inherits from his immediate parents, is but a particular species or ramification of that general misery, which, in different streams, flows to every descendant of Adam, as being *by nature a child of wrath*, Eph. ii. 3; for we all come into life under the curse of the violated covenant of works: and, as for other reasons, so even now to keep up a memorial of our concern with two important heads, it is said, on the one hand, *I am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me*, Ex. xx. 5; and on the other, that children *are beloved for their fathers sakes*. Rom. xi. 28. And it may farther assist our ideas on this subject, when we read that *Levi also, who receiveth tithes*, as a party concerned in the Abrahamic covenant, even before he was born, *paid tithes to Melchizedec in Abraham*, Heb. vii. 9.

We know what *the Shower* will think of that phrase of yours p. 8, a '*bad soil*'; but whether it does, or not, imply that you once believed the corruption of nature, that corruption is sufficiently visible in infants, before they are capable of receiving infection from any examples; as well as in instances, in which evil examples have been most faithfully kept from them. But by the definition
which

which you have given of sin, it does not appear that you have a just notion of its nature; viz. 'Sin' is something that a man has given his consent to.' Consent or dissent, Sir, is either good or evil, according to the nature of the thing about which it is employed; and it is the real evil of a thing only, that makes our consent to it evil. To love God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength, is our indisputable duty; but we cannot perform this, if there is the least moral evil in the heart, whether observed there or not: for whatever arises in the heart, contrary to the nature and law of God, is in itself evil and sinful, even before the soul adverts, or consents to it. All the ten commandments are spiritual, and fight against the inward, as well as outward, commission of the sins they forbid; but the tenth commandment proceeds yet farther, and forbids the very having of any sinful desires, before the soul consents to them: and the apostle Paul never knew sin aright, till he saw this; for, says he, *I had not known lust to be sin, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet*, Rom. vii. 7. By having these moral evils in us we are unlike God, Christ and holy angels; they are a disconformity to the law of God: they produce sinful effects, and are the seed of great and heinous abominations; they intice the will to sin; they lust against the spirit, Gal. v. 17; set open the doors of the heart to the devil; obstruct the divine intercourse; hinder the soul in the performance of duty; and are therefore the heaviest burden of good men, through the whole of their lives. Whoever has discovered *these things* in himself, (to say nothing of *sins of ignorance* committed in maturer life), will not his own self-knowledge preserve

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him from denying the corruption of nature, from setting up the power of man for his own salvation, and consequently from opposing the Godhead, and atonement of his only Saviour? But light thoughts of sin, and of the apostacy, call for, and lead to light thoughts of Christ and his salvation.

IV. *Of Election and Reprobation.*

You have gathered up the common-place objections against the doctrine of election; possibly forgetting, that whatever was or can be thought or said against it, has been long ago observed and answered by the Holy Ghost, in Rom. ix. 14—33; particularly in v. 20. *Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?* Digest this answer well, and it will prevent all heart-risings against God's sovereignty and decrees.

If God foreknew all things, he could not but foreknow who would be saved, and who would perish: and as all who are saved, are saved by his special grace, the blessed God must have designed to give that grace to those who have it; otherwise the gift of that grace, would have been an accidental thing, and the creature would not have been obliged to him for it; but every wise being acts upon a settled plan laid before, and if he has once designed to give his grace to any man, he must either have designed it from eternity, or there is an addition made to the purposes, and so to the happiness of God, which is impossible.

And what reason has thus taught heathens and Christians, the spirit of inspiration seals with his unerring testimony: so of *children not yet born, who consequently*

consequently had neither done good or evil, it was said, *The elder shall serve the younger ; as it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.* Whether you understand these words of temporal or spiritual blessings, for them or their posterity, here was a decree made before they were born ; and what was brought about afterwards was, *that the purpose of God according to election might stand.* What shall we say then ? *Is there unrighteousness with God ? God forbid ; for, speaking of the greatest of all mercies, viz. the pardon of sin (which must be, in its own nature, personal, if it is saving) he saith to Moses, Ex. xxxiii. 19. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion ; so then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy, Rom. ix. 11—16.* And as the Lord reserved to himself seven thousand men in Israel, who had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal ; so at this present time, says the apostle, *there is amongst the Jews a remnant according to the election of grace ; and the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded. Rom. xi. 4—7 ; for many are called, but few chosen. Mat. xx. 16. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of his Son : moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called ; and whom he called, them he also justified ; and whom he justified, them he also glorified. Who then shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect ? Rom. viii. 29—33. For the elects sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days. Mark xiii. 20. According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love ; having predestinated us, not only to the enjoyment of gospel privileges, but to*
the

the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to the praise of the glory of his grace, Eph. i. 4—6. *Who hath saved, and called us with an holy calling; not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began, 2 Tim. i. 9.* So the apostle John writes to the elect lady, 2 Epist. i. 13. which cannot be meant of the church at Jerusalem, because the title *Lady* * is appropriated to the literal or mystical Babylon, Isai. xlvii. 5, 7. Rev. xvii. 5.

I appeal to any man, whether words could have declared the doctrine of God's sovereignty and personal decrees, in plainer language than this: and whoever fears God, will not knowingly stretch out a finger, to wrest one of his words from their true meaning, to serve any hypothesis, or gratify any body of men whatever.

If Rom. ix. relates only to the calling of the Gentiles, and the rejection of the Jews from the privileges of the gospel, as some assert; how is it that we read of any thing there so personal, as what is said of Pharaoh, ver. 17. or of the potter's making, of the same lump, one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour, v. 20, 21. ? Certainly, as the whole Jewish nation had an external call, the apostle must speak of a particular and saving calling, when he appropriates to himself and other believers, the character of vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory; even us, adds he, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles, ver. 23, 24. However, when they have accounted for a national or personal election, to temporal or spiritual privileges, upon the prin-

* Κυρια.

ciples of creature-excellence or desert; or indeed upon any principle that lies within the reach of human penetration; we may then promise to assign a reason for a particular election to eternal life. But shall we deny the one or the other of these, merely because the Lord has not submitted his reasons for them to our inspection? We dread arbitrary government amongst men, because of their natural and moral defects; but though a resolved sinner has always every thing to fear, the creature who yields himself to God, has nothing to fear, from the all-disposing counsels of his perfect will, any more than from the wise disposals of his providence.

Yet creature pride and independence will always oppose the divine sovereignty, as long as *sinners* vainly think they have a claim upon God as *their Father*, without being spiritually born of him, or reconciled to him. But as defectibility is an essential property of a creature, and no method was found so fit to prevent the eternal ruin of rational beings in general, as that of suffering some to fall and perish without hope; I have no doubt but God's permitting this (for he is, in no sense, the author of sin) will hereafter appear to be a demonstration of the divine wisdom, holiness, and goodness. And if, notwithstanding our general desert of ruin in Adam, none should be, in fact, condemned to everlasting perdition, but in consequence of their own sin; surely then every mouth must be stopt at the day of the Lord: and even now, your positive determination, that 'this doctrine is certainly a doctrine of licentiousness, and not a doctrine according to godliness,' will not be admitted in evidence, against the plain and indubitable

indubitable testimony of scripture, which asserts it.

Nor is this despised truth without its manifold and important uses ; for besides the great comfort which assured Christians derive from a belief of particular election, upon *sublapsarian* principles ; besides their steady hopes which arise from it, of God's continued care of them, and of all his people, in time and eternity ; and the powerful incentives which it affords them to every Christian duty ; this doctrine is adapted, and therefore was designed, to convince all men, to whom the word of God comes, (1.) Of the evil of Adam's sin, on account of which, it would have been just in God, if he had saved none of the human race. (2.) Of the divine sovereignty, in dispensing those temporal, spiritual, and eternal blessings to whom he pleases, which no man had any original right to. (3.) Of the riches of his grace to those who are the vessels of mercy. And, (4.) To excite all professors to a speedy and vigorous improvement of the means of salvation, which God has put into their hands ; for *many are called, but few chosen*. For these ends God has revealed, and his ministers publish, this doctrine ; and you must either prove that these ends are not important in themselves, that this doctrine is not adapted to answer them, or that they can as well be answered without it, or you will never make some men ashamed to vindicate this part of revealed truth, in the face of all opposition and contempt from their fellow-sinners.

But I hasten to meet you on another ground, which, I see, you are much intent upon making good. Your forlorn hope may fail you ; however, you

you will succeed as well as some others, who have, before you, risen up against,

V. *The Divinity of Christ.*

I shall not enquire whether there is any policy in the widely different opinions of those who deny the Godhead of Christ; but this is certain, if all your friends should agree with you in pronouncing this ‘an impious doctrine, a mystery of iniquity, ‘a great error of popery, and a shocking corruption of genuine Christianity,’ yet they have not all attained your degrees; they are not all adepts; some have a modesty left about them, and therefore dare not, with you, describe the Son of God, as ‘a mere man, as other Jews, and as we ourselves also are.’ Yet you are not altogether singular in this opinion; the Jews are of the same mind; and you have certainly as much divinity in you as their ancestors, who said, *Is not this the carpenter’s son? is not his mother called Mary, and his brethren James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas; and his sisters, are they not all with us?*—Yes, it is past dispute, he was really a man, ‘as other Jews, and as we ourselves also are;’ and as such he is infinitely inferior to the Father: And if this had been your whole meaning, you might either have saved yourself the trouble of quoting scriptures, to prove what no man denies, or have added many more besides, which ever you had pleased. But can he be ‘a mere man,’ of whom the Holy Ghost said, *They shall call his name Immanuel, which, being interpreted, is God with us?* Matth. i. 23. Isaiah, at least, who first published this his name,

chap.

chap. vii. 14. appears to have considered him as the true God; for he not only opposes him to all the threats and attempts of their enemies, saying, chap. viii. 9, 10. (*ki Himmanuel*, Heb.) *for God is with us*; but he also calls him *the Lord of hosts*, ver. 13, 14. See 1 Pet. ii. 8.

I should also apprehend, that unprejudiced persons will certainly discover something more than mere humanity, in the being of whom the following things are said.

Gen. xxxii. 24, 30. Hos. xii. 3—5. The person with whom Jacob wrestled, is called a *man*, an *angel*, *God*, *Jehovah*, and *the Lord God of hosts*.

Psal. lxxviii. 17, 18. *The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels; the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.* Applied to Christ, Eph. iv. 8.

Psal. cx. 1. *The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool*; this proves him to be more by nature than *David's son*, Matth. xxii. 44.

Isai. vi. 1. *I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, &c.* applied to Christ, John xii. 40, 41: and to the Spirit, Acts xxviii. 25, 26.

Isai. ix. 6. *His name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.*

Zach. xiii. 7. *Awake, O sword, against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts.*

Matth.

Matth. ix. 4. John ii. 24, 25. Rev. ii. 23. Jesus knowing their thoughts; because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man. And, says he, All the churches shall know, that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts, which is the character of God only.

Matth. ix. 6. Mark ii. 7. Who can forgive sins but * God only? The son of man hath power, † or authority, on earth to forgive sins.

Matth. xi. 27. No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, but the Son.

Luke xxiv. 45. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.

John i. 1, 2. In the beginning was the Word; and the Word was with God, and the Word was God; the same was in the beginning with God. Was there any being in the beginning but God? or could an honest writer, designing to use the word God twice, in two short verses, in a proper sense, allow himself to use it a third time, and, between them, to signify a mere man, without any mark of distinction whatever? For a slight acquaintance with the Greek Testament will shew you, that the presence or absence of the article *ὁ* (prefixed to *θεός*,) has nothing in it distinguishing.

John iii. 13. The Son of man, who is in heaven.

John xvii. 10. All my things are thy things, and thy things are my things. Gr.

John xx. 28. Thomas said unto him, My Lord and my God.

Acts xx. 28. Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

* ΕΙΜΕΝ.

† ΕΞΟΥΣΙΑΣ.
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Rom.

Rom. ix. 5. *Christ is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.*

1 Cor. x. 9. *Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.* Numb. xxi. 6.

Phil. ii. 6. *He thought it not robbery to be equal with God.* The word is not *ἀπαρτῆμα*, but *ἀπαρτῆμος*; which, being different from the former, may well be supposed to have a different meaning. I deny therefore the justness of your criticism, viz. that '*Christ was far from thinking of such an impious robbery, as that of being equal with God [for so you say the text ought to have been translated;]*' and, till you produce one single instance, in any approved writer, where the word is used in your sense, I will continue to read the text as ~~Beza~~

Beza and Tremellius; as Cranmer's Bible, and as our own and other learned translators read it, *He thought it not an act of robbery to be equal with God.*

Col. i. 16. *All things were created by him, and for him* *. See Heb. iii. 4.

It would be blasphemy to say of a mere man, *In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.* Col. ii. 9.

1 Tim. iii. 16. *Great is the mystery of Godliness; God was manifest in the flesh.*

1 John iii. 16. *God laid down his life for us.*

1 John v. 20, 21. *The Son of God hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.*

Rev. xxii. 13. *I am alpha and omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.* See Isai. xlv. 6.

* Εἰς αὐτόν.

Certainly these scriptures, *prima facie*, say such things as are incompatible with the idea of a creature, much more so of 'a mere man;' and I hope the scriptures don't carry two faces. Go then, tell the ignorant and unlearned, *This is not in the original*, and, *That is translated wrong*; many of them will gaze, admire your learning, and become half infidels, as to the whole of revealed religion, under your hand. Yet remember, he that said, *Before Abraham was, I am*, has also declared, *If ye believe not that I am **, *ye shall die in your sins*, John viii. 24.

But, besides these inspired attestations to this truth, farther evidences of the Godhead of Christ arise, (1) From his working many miracles, without even mentioning the name of his Father, or making any applications or appeals to him: not so his disciples; they never attempted to controul the course of nature, but under an avowed dependence upon their Master's power. (2) From the full satisfaction which he offered for sin. To men who have seen this infinite evil in the clear glass of the violated law, and flee to the great atonement, as their only shelter from the wrath divine, Christ's Godhead will appear necessary to give firmness and stability to their hope in him. But I am sensible this argument will have no weight with you, till you have juster notions, and a deeper sense of sin, than you have discovered p. 9. and 17. of your *Appeal*. See 1 John v. 10, 11. (3) From the care of his church, and every individual in it, to controul the power and policy of their enemies, and to be a head of influence and grace to each of them. For this task, mere human, and mere an-

* ΟΤΙ ΕΓΩ ΕΙΜΙ.

gelic abilities, are utterly disproportioned; for he that is the *head of the body*, and the *head over all things to the church*, must be omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent.—But another argument, which will sum up the evidences of Christ's Godhead, and be, in its own time, so convincing as to put an eternal end to all doubting and uncertainty, arises, (4) From his character, as Judge, at the great day. When he opens the graves; when he reanimates the long-forgotten ages with undecaying life; when every creature stands trembling, or rejoicing before him, whilst his all-piercing eye discloses and rewards the secrets of every heart; and when heaven and earth fly before his dreadful appearance, will any individual doubt, in that day, whether he is standing before God the Judge of all? This is the last of those *greater works* which the Father will shew the Mediator, God-man; for the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son; that all men should honour the Son, *ναῶς*, even as they honour the Father, John v. 22, 23. The word occurs about a hundred and eighty times in the New Testament, and commonly signifies an exact agreement of one thing with another; so at least that august assembly mentioned, Rev. v. 13. understood the words; and therefore gave exactly the same honour to the Son as to the Father; for, says John, *Every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them; heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.* I wish, Sir, you could join the four beasts, and say, with their views, *Amen*, ver. 14.—This trust, viz. to judge the world, being committed to the Lord Jesus, supposes

poses that he has a nature capable of the discharge of it: and when he appears, those words will be fulfilled in *Isai. xlv. 23. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear*; and surely the apostles, 'notwithstanding their attachment to their Lord and master,' [to use your own very observable phrase, p. 13.] would not have applied this, or such passages to Christ, in *Rom. xiv. 11. Phil. ii. 10.* if they had not been originally spoken of him, though they are certainly spoken of the true God.

True, we can no more comprehend that *mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ*, which the church of God has, in every age, *acknowledged*, than the nut-shell can contain the waters of the ocean; but this can be no proof that God has not revealed these things. You are yourself a social nature, consisting of soul, body, and spirit; and why may not your Maker be social too, for man was made in the image of God? You probably believe that God could, if he had pleased, have joined three equal natures in your wondrous frame, and called it *man*; and that, if one of these three equal natures, had been, for a time, employed in an inferior service, it would not have really destroyed its equality with the others; why then do you esteem it impossible that Father, Son, and Spirit, should be one self-existent Deity? That three should be one, and one three, is confessedly above our reason; but is it therefore above God's? Certainly, the disproportion between him and us, can never be estimated by the most labouring thought; and ten thousand things, which overwhelm our powers, are his perpetual entertainment.

ment. We are therefore wise indeed, when we have learned that we *know nothing*.

I only add on this subject, that as *no man knoweth the Son, but the Father*, so, whoever knows him savingly, *flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto him, but the Father which is in heaven*: And though reason can tell you, that the Father would not have constituted any being *Lord of all*, but one who had a nature capable of sustaining so important a character; yet *no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost*, 1 Cor. xii. 3. To his teaching I earnestly commend you, knowing that *whosoever shall, in heart and life, confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God*, 1 John iv. 15.

VI. *Of atonement for sin by the death of Christ.*

Very probably some of the Jews, in Christ's time, had no more sense of their need of his dying as a sacrifice for them, than you, and some other Englishmen, have now; but, though you may easily persuade benighted sinners, that their own repentance and reformation, self-wrought, and spun out of their own bowels, is all the satisfaction which a holy God requires of them; yet to men who have felt the mighty terrors of those words, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all the things, which are written in the book of the law, to do them*, and see clearly, that they can as well span the heavens, as furnish a righteousness commensurate to the demands of that immutable law; to such the righteousness of faith will always appear infinitely desirable: and it will be impossible to prevent their drawing nigh to God, with a dependence upon this as their only hope, as long as the following,

following, and such like passages, continue to adorn and endear the inspired pages; viz.

Isai. liii. 4, &c. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed; the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. For the transgression of my people was he stricken, but when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

Dan. ix. 26. Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself.

Mark x. 45. The Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many. I Tim. ii. 6.

John x. 15. I lay down my life for the sheep.

Rom. iv. 25. Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

Rom. v. 8. God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

1 Cor. v. 7. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.

2 Cor. v. 21. He made him to be sin for us who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Gal. ii. 20. Who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Gal. iii. 13. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.

Eph. v. 2. Christ hath loved us, and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savour.

Heb. i. 3. When he had by himself purged our sins.

Heb. vii. 26, 27. Such an high priest became us, who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices,

sacrifices, first for his own sins, and then for the peoples; for this he did once, when he offered up himself.

Heb. ix. 13, &c. If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God?—Without shedding of blood, is no remission: but now once, in the end of the world, hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; for Christ was once offered, to bear the sins of many.

Heb. xiii. 12. Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood; suffered without the gates.

1 Pet. i. 18, 19. Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ.

1 Pet. ii. 24. Who his own self bare our sins, in his own body, on the tree. By whose stripes ye were healed.

Rev. i. 5. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins, in his own blood.

Rev. v. 9. Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.

These scriptures assure us, that as we are justified freely by God's grace; so it is through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood; to declare his righteousness at this time, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus, Rom. iii. 24, &c. and as Christ's being in a violent agony in the garden, and forsaken of his Father on the cross, can be no otherwise accounted for, but upon the supposition of his dying as a sacrifice in our stead; so your own reason can inform you, that God must have as high, as holy and wise a reason for

for reversing the sentence of his dreadful law against a sinner, as he first had for denouncing that sentence against him. And God's really providing such a method to be reconciled to us, may well convince us, both of the necessity of an atonement, (which was *witnessed by the law and the prophets,*) and that this oblation was adequately satisfactory; and at the same time, his finding such an expensive way of shewing mercy to us, certainly takes off nothing from the riches of his grace, but greatly enhances it.

In allusion to the sacrifices of the law, we are ordered to present our *bodies a living sacrifice*, Rom. xii. 1. and to *offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually*, Heb. xiii. 15. But as these things cannot be that substance, of which the law had the *types*; therefore Christ's sacrifice must be that substance, or else the figures and shadows of the law, those *patterns of things then in the heavens*, were instituted and continued in the Jewish church fifteen hundred years in vain; for they could not of themselves take away sin.

Yet, notwithstanding this ransom, God forgives us freely, even as we are called to *forgive men their trespasses*. We are men, and not God, and therefore cannot create a person in whom we may have satisfaction for an offence committed against us; besides, our enemies stand in no such relation to us, as subsists between us and God; but if you forgive an enemy, without any satisfaction, either made by him, or of his procuring, you forgive as God forgives us. If you forgive him upon his repentance, (Luke xvii. 4.) as that repentance does not repair the injury done you, you forgive him freely: but if you truly repent of sin, that repentance does not spring from yourself, but is given
you

you by the Lord Jesus; therefore your repentance itself, much enhances the riches of that mercy, which farther bestows *the forgiveness of sin*, Acts v. 31.

Under this head, you mention the parable of the *prodigal son*, which, no doubt, represents the relation which subsists between God and the Gentile world, and the gracious reception which they shall meet with, when they return to him; but as you did not design to detach that scripture from all others, so that parable was no more intended to teach us the whole will of God for our salvation, than one of your paragraphs was designed to give us the whole meaning of your little book. If the *prodigal* had been a proselyte to the Jewish church, he must have brought a sacrifice; and if he is a Christian, he must come *to the blood of sprinkling*, Heb. xii. 24.

To conclude.

The undated tale * of Mr. Elwal, the *Arian Quaker*, if told at midnight, may raise a thousand spectres around the mind; but they will all disappear at the opening dawn, or as soon as your own brethren recollect, that they must either distinguish between a good cause, and bad management, or else will be forced to commend those *Arian* persecutions, in the fourth and fifth centuries, which I will by no means suppose you inclined openly to vindicate.

Many of the clergy, greatly mortified to have it so repeatedly proved upon them, by some of their own brethren, that they have subscribed to articles which they never believed; instead of seeking to have their faith altered to that standard of scrip-

* In a little book, which has this great title, *The Triumph of Truth*.

ture,

ture, from which they professed to believe those articles were drawn, are, I hear, preparing to petition the Parliament * against the articles themselves. That such a step as this would be taken, was foreseen when Arminianism met with so cordial a reception amongst us at first; however, if these petitioners, or their friends, had not disturbed the methodistical clergy, but suffered them to go quietly to heaven in their own way, their own disgrace had not been so much talked of, and the present repose of their own unsubscribing consciences, might have been better secured.—But perhaps you are a Dissenter, Sir; if so, that respectable body has little reason to thank you, as the principles you avow, have notoriously diminished their number, and consequently lessened their interest in the nation: but whatever you are, God's *salvation will be forever*, and his righteousness shall *not be abolished*: and as long as there are Christians upon earth, demonstrations will arise of the weakness of your vain assertion; viz. 'that men of plain understandings, in fact, never do believe any such thing' as original sin, imputed righteousness, and the doctrine of a Triune Deity.

Man being formed capable of holding communion with his every-where present Maker, in his words and works; and of reciprocating and interchanging thoughts, affections, and converse with him, God forbid I should ever believe, that a sober decent moral conduct, together with a regular attendance upon the external duties of revealed religion, is all that is necessary to constitute a Christian. And as an internal energetic principle of grace, is as essential to the holiness and happiness of a good man, as the regular motion of the wheels

* A. D. 1772.

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of a clock, is, to its answering its end in a family; I earnestly pray God, to prevent what you have said against *spiritual feelings*, and *Christian experiences*, in p. 22. from doing that eternal mischief to unwary professors, which it is visibly adapted to do.

You may be a *lover* of what you call *the gospel*; but I beseech you to consider that there is *another gospel* spoken of, besides the true, in Gal. i. And are your friends, Sir, ready to exceed in their abundant regards to the *external means of religion*? At least, the caution you have given, p. 23. not to lay 'an undue stress upon praying, preaching, and other means of religion,' must, I should apprehend, produce you an address of thanks from all the lazy preachers in the kingdom, if their indolence does not prevent it.

I have no desire to offend you; but intreat you to lay aside prejudice, and search the scriptures once more. The cause is important; and I have aimed to write with the same freedom, as if I had not another breath to draw in this world. In this freedom, I add; what some men call *charity*, others call *infidelity*; and accordingly *watch and pray* against that which they hold up to *admiration*, as a Christian virtue.

If you reply to this Letter, as a considerable part of my time is employed about things which are confessedly important in their own nature, it will depend upon things, yet to me wholly unknown, whether you will ever hear again from,

Sir, Your sincere wellwisher,

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And willing Servant in the Gospel.

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